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ABSTRACT

Issues in the study of bilingualism and multilingualism in India and Pakistan are examined, including the delineation of linguistic boundaries, defining a society that is multicultural and yet has developed a "communication ethos" based on a core of common experience, the difficulty in interpreting language role and defining language usage in a multicultural area, the relationship between language identity and communication, definition of bilingual identity, and the role of the government and language elite(s) in language identity. Three indexes of prominent language pressure that affect language use in a given area are described: the state language pressure index; Hindi-Urdu pressure index; and English pressure index. It is concluded that the Indian experience suggests that a genuine understanding of multicultural societies will be guided largely by viewing language as a synergistic network inspiring trust in cross-cultural settings while empowering the particular. Contains 38 references. (MSE)

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Plurilingual Ethos : A Peep into the Sociology of Language

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Studies on multilingualism have a rather shady past. Till recently many studies in the field viewed the phenomena of individual or societal multilingualism as a matter of human adjustment, and confined their enquiries to the problems such as accounting for interference in second language acquisition, and for the distortionism, resulting from language contact such as hybridization, pidginization, and so on. This paper examines these phenomena in detail from the point view of societal bilingualism and plurilingualism in India and Pakistan.

Language Boundaries

Historical bias in favour of treating language as an autonomous system within the confines of *sharp* boundaries and with its distinct history and tradition has undermined the characteristics of variability, openness, ambiguity, vagueness and fuzziness in a 'living' language – hallmarks of communication in everyday life. These characteristics acquire greater visibility in verbal repertoires of plurilingual societies. Language boundaries in plurilingual settings serve as markers to construct the fuzzy reality, as manifested in a verbal repertoire through a variety of blending processes and rolling on strategies such as reflexification, diglossic complementation, neutralization, code-switching, and so on.

Organisers of the Seminar* have rightly pointed out to the phenomenon: "A formal linguist begins to wonder where the boundaries of one language end and the frontiers of another begin." Haugen, (1972), observes:

*Paper presented at the International Seminar on Multilingualism organised by the Delhi University, January 1998.

> The concept of language as a rigid, monolithic structure is false, even if it has proved to be a useful fiction in the development of linguistics. It is the kind of simplification that is necessary at a certain stage of science, but which can now be replaced by more sophisticated models.

Recent debates over the issues of convergence and divergence of Ebonics and American Standard English (Huang 1997), and agitations in Pakistan over distinguishing Siraiki (Multani) from Panjabi (Rahman 1996) are blatant examples of inter-language boundaries (such as interdialectal boundaries) being fuzzy and fluid. In the Indian census, until recently Dogri and Kangri were regarded as varieties of Panjabi. But since 1971, Dogri has been granted the status of an independent language, and Kangri has been re-grouped under the Hindi amalgam. Traditionally Halabi was regarded as a hybrid variety of Marathi, but since 1971 it has been assigned an independent status.

On the South Asian scene, verbal communications are, by and large, characterized by varying degrees of boundaries between languages, dialects or speech varieties, such as boundaries between Panjabi and Hindi, Urdu and Hindi, Dogri and Panjabi, and Konkani and Marathi, can be explained only through a pluralistic view of language.

> Just as geographical borders vary from discreet (Sic) signs announcing existence of a boundary to the intricacies of customs, inspections, and military checkpoints, social borders, vary in degree of definition from minimum acknowledgement of social similarity to its public and formal proclamations (Ross 1975).

The issue of delineating borders are not very different from those concerning the delineation of social borders.

In a plural society, language identity alone, just as religious identity alone, cannot universally be regarded as defining membership in any order or institution. Often, such groups operate across conventional religion or language boundaries as delineated by the dictates of the clergy or grammarians and other custodians of these traditions. Such groups are marked by their fuzzy traits and are averse to their being rigidly identified with a particular insulated

group. Such discrete groups in Indian society are conceptually different from insular societies as nationality groups in Europe, which are marked by congruent identities amenable to clear-cut categorizations by their convergence in the same territory.

The constituents of Indian mosaic fit together to form an integral whole. The phenomenon of plurality in mother tongues, fluidity in verbal repertoire across languages, and discontinuities in beliefs and religious practices (a mark of syncretism), is much more widesread than has been recognized in the socio-cultural and linguistic studies of the subcontinent. Until as recently as four to five decades ago, one's language group was not generally considered as a very important criterion for sharply distinguishing oneself from others. One often noticed that in many Indian communities the urge to belong to a particular language group was often relegated to a somewhat less significant status in one's subjective evaluation of strata:

> So deep does bilingualism go in parts of Ganjam that from very infancy many grow up speaking both Oriya and Telugu, and are as much at home in both that they cannot tell which to return as their mother tongue (Hutton 1933 : 349).

Hitherto many agencies concerned with social planning, under the influence of purists' tradition in philosophy and pedagogy, have been viewing such diversity in a region as pre-modern, inefficient, leading to political instability and technological backwardness. On the other hand, many contemporary social and political thinkers are convinced of the merits of maintaining and respecting cultural diversity, like nurturing bio-diversity in eco-systems, in search of the post-modern paradigm of socio-cultural and language developement. Faced with this dilemma, many linguistis seem not to have come to terms with fully grasping the composite and integral character of the plurilingual ethos in many Oriental and African societies. In the debates over framing a language and communication policy for the country, very often one finds planners articulating diametrically opposite stands on this issue: Is plurality of language in an area a *handicap* or an *asset* in social development? When it is regarded as a handicap in integrating a nation, some compromises are suggested with a view to coping with the prevailing diversity through

some kind of selective bilingualism (or a grudging multilingualism) to bring some order out of chaos. But on the other hand, when it is considered as an asset, the 'monistic' tools of language study are not found to be adequate enough to spell out what exactly needs to be done to utilize the potential of the diverse heritage of this subcontinent and to gain insights into the dynamics of plural societies generally.

Most of the regions in South Asia are marked by the plurality of cultures and languages in one space (village, town, district, state, nation). This experience provides a unique mosaic of verbal experience which has withstood the test of time over the centuries. A critical appraisal of communication patterns in the Indian region demonstrates the magnitude of functional heterogeneity in language use. Some of the salient characteristics out of which the edifice of linguistic plurality in the subcontinent has been built over the years such as relativity, hierarchy, instrumentality are discussed at length by the author elsewhere (Khubchandani 1983, 1997). Speech activity as an ongoing process and as a normative entity responds to a variety of communication settings (see the Table p.9). In the Indian plurilingual milieu, 'Ausbau' languages such as Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi are as such products of the *environment* as of the *tradition* (Kloss 1967, Khubchandani 1991:55-83). Whorf, a neo-Herderian champion, makes out a strong case for 'multilingual/multicultural awareness', pleading for a world in which 'little people' and 'little languages' would not only be respected but valued" (cited in Fishman 1982:5). In Steiner's view (1975) also, a mathematical 'universalist' model of language is bound to fail to account for the nature of relations between languages (or speech varieties) as they actually exist and differ; thus rejecting a theory of *language* in favour of a theory of *languages*.

The South ~~Indian~~ Asian region as a whole presents a rich sample of entry points into an understanding of plurality. Communication pursuits in linguistic enquiry place the boundaries of speech spectrum in a fluid 'transactional' mode. Viewed in the light of two extremes – the universal and the particular, one overwhelming characteristic is emerging in the realm of scientific enquiry, that is, a growing awareness of the *plurality* of cognitions, structures and institutions

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Table 1 : *Speech as Living Phenomena*

Speech Process	Normative Entity
I. *Communication Device*	
1. An organic process, potentially diverse and heterogeneous.	A formalized entity, emphasizing uniformity and homogeneity.
2. Regarded as a non-autonomous device, communicating in symphony with other nonlinguistic devices; its full signification can be explicated only from the imperatives of context and communicative tasks.	Ideally aiming at the targets of being an autonomous and unambiguous tool of communication.
3. Interpretation dependent on the focus of communication "field" and the degree of individual's "sensitivity" towards it.	Interpretation relying heavily on explicit formulas-grammars, dictionaries, etc., efforts for consistency made through the standardization apparatus.
4. An effortless integral activity; discourse centers around the "event" with the support of ad hoc "expression" strategies.	An ideal-oriented representation requiring directed effort: discourse concetrates on "expression," which measures the "event."
II. *Strategy of Control*	
5. Guided by implicit identity pressure–a sort of etiquette agreed upon ad hoc by those participating in it.	Characterized by explicitly defined value system–a prescriptive code with sanctions from the language elite in the community.
6. Regulated by "situation-bound" propriety in which ecosystems, constituting the social reality "here and now," claim a prominent share.	Conditioned by "tradition-inspired" profiles in which "time-honored" standard practices (spelled out through the grammatical accounts, lexicons, and style sheets) dominate the scene.
7. Permissive toward inherited variations linked with region, class, etc.	Less tolerant toward such ascribed deviations; assimilatory pressures in favour of the elitist standard variety.
III. *Total Repertoire*	
8. Total verbal repertoire in malleable, responsive to contextual expediencies resulting in uninhibited convergence between speech varieties with the contact pressure of pidginization, hybridization, code-switching, etc.	Total verbal repertoire is demarcated for the demands of different normative systems (specified by a "distant" elite) involving stress on maintaining divergent development of a different system, and insistence on exlusiveness or "purity" of tradition.
9. Greater scope for functional fluidity leading to innovations and creativity of expression in negotiating the "event."	Restrictions over the scope for spontaneity and creativity due to the pressures of exlusive conformity to different systems.
10. Fuzzy speech boundaries; interlocking variations responding to covert stratificational and situational differences.	Sharp language boundaries; compartmentalization through overt linguistic differentia.

(Source : Khubchandani 1983)

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which have a great bearing on human activity as such (for a detailed discussion on the issues distinguishing 'closely-knit' systems from relatively 'open-ended' systems in language use, see Khubchandani 1996).

Defining Plural Society

In spite of a wide spectrum of linguistic and cultural variation in everyday life, Indian masses through sustained interaction and common legacies have, by and large, developed a common way of interpreting of sharing experience, of thinking – a sort of 'communication ethos'. Many speech groups in the region associate diversity of speech (whether treated as languages, vernaculars, dialects/varieties, lingua francas) around it with differential values in social interaction. These considerations provide a strong evidence for treating India as a plural society, where boundaries of neither socio-cultural nor socio-linguistic traits are clearly marked. A 'civilizational' state like India aims at fostering *oneness* among its people in a region, it points to the direction in which a culture is oriented, the things it aims at, prizes and endorses, and more or less achieves.

Individuals in a plural society belong to different identity groups, clustered around cultural, linguistic and social traits (such as nationality, religion, caste, language/dialect) and share only a *core* of experience, criss-crossing in more than one manner, hardly co-terminating within the same boundary. Each of these differences may be important in that it would operate to distinguish one group from another in all traits.

> Individuals joined by a single trait are generally marked by their *variety*, their *lack of unity* and their tendency to act as fairly *discrete groups* relative to the pulls and pressures of the time and space (Khubchandani 1983:6).

In the context of culture, the traditional Indian concept of *kshetra* (approximate translation, region) covers a wide spectrum of linguistic and cultural variation in everyday performace. It helps to

foster the feeling of oneness among diverse people in the region, creating in them 'a sense of collective reality'. This concept is markedly different from the modern Western model of *region* defined as 'cohensive and homogenous area', created by *arbitrary* selection of transient features such as religion, language, tradition (Saraswati 1988, Khubchandani 1991). In this paradigm, the distinction between the categories such as majority/minority communities, and developed/developing languages need to be critically evaluated.

The Konkani region along the western coastal belt, ranging from Bombay to Cochin, can be cited as a good illustration of *kshetra* in a traditional Indian framework (Khubchandani 1991). Konkani mother tongue speakers (nearly 1.6 million as per the 1981 Census) are spread in varied concentrations in the districts of Greater Bombay and Ratnagiri in Maharashtra, Goa, North and South Kanara districts in Karnataka, and the Ernakulam district in Kerala. The Konkani *kshetra* presents a rich mosaic of multimodal speech spectrum with its main centres in Bombay, Mapuca, Margoa, Belgaum, Mangalore and Cochin, and accentuated by different socio-cultural identities such as Brahmins, Christians, Gowd Saraswats, Sonars etc. (Rajathi and Kulshreshta 1985).

Most of the Konkanis live in the midst of powerful literary neighbours (speaking Marathi, Kannada, Malayalam), with the result that there are very few monolingual Konkani speakers. Konkani writings (mostly interpersonal and journalistic) are found in different scripts – Roman, Devanagiri, Kannada, Malayalam – responding to the historical forces of conversion and migration during the Portuguese rule, and the developmental apsirations of the masses in the post-Independence era. Nearly two-thirds of Konkanis live outside the Konkani-dominant Goa state. The proportion of urbanity (45 per cent) and literacy is also claimed to be much higher than the all-India average.

The Panjabi-speaking 'composite' sociolinguistic region across the Indo-Pakistan border presents another interesting example of *kshetra* (Khubchandani 1988). It ranges from the southern parts of North-West Frontier Province (NWFP in Pakistan) to Delhi, and

from Jammu valley and Bilaspur (in Himachal Pradesh) to the Ganganagar district (in Rajasthan). The cultural consciousness of the Panjabi people emanates from the multiple centres of tradition characterized by the heterogeneity of faiths, varieties of speech, of writing systems, literary traditions, and so on. Many groups belonging to different socio-cultural identities (such as Muslims, Gujars, Jats, Dogras and Paharis) have over the years been sharing a common cultural ethos.

This plural mosaic is not only reflected in the rich Panjabi language and literature written in Gurumukhi script, the Sikh holy scriptures, the mystic Sufi poetry, written in the Arabic and Devangiri scripts, but is also manifested in the common folk language, folk arts, dance, songs, and the tonal rhythm when speaking Panjabi, Dogri, Kangri, Bangru, Hindi, or Urdu, and the new idiom developed in recent years around Delhi, called *Milijuli* – a Panjabized Hindustani (Sachdeva 1982).

In the process of modernization, there has been a resurgence of ethnic identities manifested through the claims of language and religion. In a contemporary society, the language for *exclusive* identity generally strives for its "autonomous" development, though there may be more than one languages functional in everyday life. There is also a trend among modern societies, for the monistic commitment of a single script for one language – the Gurumukhi script in the case of Panjabi. A section of Hindus write Panjabi in Devanagiri script. There are signs in favour of a larger role for Panjabi among Muslims in Pakistan when they write Panjabi in the Perso-Arabic script. A recognition of the *complementary* use of three writing systems for Panjabi can be instrumental in forging a feeling of oneness at the diasporic (*biradari*) level among the 7.5 crore Panjabis (1981 estimates) across the Indo-Pakistan border. Such efforts can significantly contribute in changing the imperilled frontier cutting across the Panjabi culture into the enchanting frontier.

A pluralistic world-view and the relativist approach in interpreting heritage and culture have been characterized as the essence of Oriental life. Often different roles in a setting, and different identities or cultural legacies, transmit some prominent values of interaction

called communication ethos, as discussed earlier. The Indian subcontinent presents a kind of organic plurality where different identities are simply two side of the same coin. The differentiation of socio-cultural and socio-linguistic trait gets integrated through a super-consensus, providing an enriching factor to the Indian reality.

When accepting any one cultural trait, say language, as a criterion for defining the region, the boundaries could be drawn on the basis of linguistic families (Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Austric, etc.), literary standards (Tamil, Bengali, Hindi), or regional 'anchors' (Bhojpuri, Maithili, Chhatisgarhi, Konkani). In the context of north India, however, language was actually a 'secondary line of cleavage' (Brass 1974): it merely served as an 'accentuating' factor in regional identity. The States Reorganization Commision's efforts in 1956 to effect a co-terminality between administrative units and linguistic regions have converted cultural frontiers into political frontiers.

> The disjuncture between officially created units such as Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar or Andhra Pradesh on the one hand, and the folk regions, which are invariably cultural entities such as Bhojpur, Chhatisgarh, Magadh, Mithila, Jharkhand, Vidarbha, Telengana on the other should be recognized here (Oommen 1986:53-74).

Interpreting a Plural Area

One notices India, as a language area, often being subjected to various contradictory interpretations. Much of the confusion in interpreting India's language scene comes from the tendency to deal with the subcontinent either as a whole, or as a series of small linguistically isolated units. For a better understanding of the newly emerging communication patterns in the pluralistic society that India is, it is necessary to supplement the static accounts of the multiplicity of languages in the country. This should include the ecological perspective of different cultural regions, the *kshetras*, and the dynamic patterns of diversified behaviour among different speech groups within and across each unit.

In the post-Independence era, the assertions of cultural homogeneity in the heterogeneous South Asian region have triggered

a note of dissonance among many interest groups in different states. "Regions are far from fixed, enduring things, especially if any historical perspective is taken. They are not absolutes and they are difficult, if not impossible, to define by objective criteria" (Cohn 1967:32).

The reorganized linguistic states in the Indian federal polity are *not neccessarily* homogeneous communication regions. In all the states, linguistic minorities add up to a quarter of the total population (25.5 percent as per the 1961 Census) which can exercise a significant weight in the federal polity (Khubchandani 1972b). In the framework of linguistic states, languages of minority populations are often being relegated to vernacular status (or are associated as dialects of major languages, in the region), and they are asked to accept the supremacy of the numerically dominant regional language in the domains of public communication.

Though traditionally the stength of linguistic plurality in the subcontinent lies in the intensity of functional heterogeneity in communication in the region as a whole, one notices many forces at work, promoting cultural and/or linguistic homogenization among different groups. The linguistic reorganization of Indian provinces enforced in 1956, based primarily on the language identity of the dominant pressure groups, is one such example in recent times. Very often, such pressures towards bringing about coercive homogeneity in communication in favour of the language identity of dominant groups (such as the imposition of compulsory teaching of Kannada for linguistic minorities in Karnataka) generate insular tendencies among plural societies; insulation of this sort amounts to less aperture in cross-cultural communications.

In plural societies, such as India, one finds inherent contradictions on the language scene (concerning different aspects of speech behaviour) in meeting the demands of contemporary institutions: namely, patterns of language use, levels of competence, unconscious attitudes/images, and conscious assertions/postures. The intricacies of language behaviour in the Indian context reveal apparent ambiguities in defining the concept mother tongue itself (Khubchandani 1972a, 1972b). Speech variation in everyday settings is explicated as an instrument of an ongoing redefinition of

relationships. The *posture* towards, and the *image* of a mother tongue does not necessarily claim congruity with actual *usage*, and these, again, are not rigidly identified with specific language territories.

On the basis of language-identity pressures, the country can be divided into two major zones : Stable zone and Fluid zone. The north-central part of the country, comprising all Hindi states, Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir, belongs to the Fluid zone where language-identity and language-communication patterns are not necessarily congruent. Affiliations with one language or the other keep fluctuating with the shift in socio-political climate and pressures of acculturation. Population in this zone have other than linguistic criteria for determinating ingroup/outgroup identity.

The remaining states belong to the Stable zone where language identity populations, by and large, emerge in consonance with the communication patterns. In this zone, areas of predominant languages are clearly marked, and the increases in the regionally dominant mother tongues, languages run parallel to the normal growth in the total population (the variation in the growth rate not exceeding ± 4 per cent to account for territorial adjustment at the time of the states recognization in 1956) (for details, see Khubchandani 1983).

A better understanding of trends can be achieved by identifying major cultural ranges in the country which show many parallels in their social and communication environments in spite of a widespread linguistic and religious heterogeneity within and across each unit. With this aim in view, several language areas have been grouped together in seven prominent cultural zones to enable us to comprehend the composite reality of the nation. These zones can be visualized as a *rainbow*; here different dimensions interflow semiotically into one another, responsive to differences of identity as in an osmosis. Seven cultural zones informally identified are Northern, North-central, Central (tribal), Western, Eastern, North-eastern, Southern (for details, see Khubchandani 1991: 84-86).

This spectrum can further be divided into smaller cultural regions, or *kshetras*, as per the relevance of distinctiveness focused in a particular context. These *kshetras* (numbering thirty to forty) are

hardly co-terminous with political and administrative boundaries. Smaller units within a *kshetra* have been referred as *janapadas*.

Bias towards the time-scale in linguistics, probably taken from the philological tradition of language families, has been so pervasive that even studies of various *spatial* aspects of speech behaviour – such as regional dialects, bilingualism, diglossia, language contact and borrowings – are couched in terms of temporality.

A Profile of Languages

In the realm of language policy-making and language planning we tend to 'perceive' languages in monolithic terms. Language rights movements also generally focus attention on monistic aspects of language *X* or language *Y*. In everyday life we may generalize languages as 'strong' or 'weak' in *categorical* terms. But when looking at the scene in a plurilingual paradigm, we need to devise a scale plotting *stronger* or *weaker* languages in *relative* terms which respond, in a unique manner, to be space-and-time-bound reality.

In a heterogeneous situation one can identify various dimensions of reality, namely

1 language *accreditation* by the State
2 identity *aspirations* of a speech community
3 *accessibility* of a language in everyday communications.

(1) Laws of the land assign differential *status* to languages in a defined domain. Certain languages are marked for special privileges through legislative provisions and through education and media policies promoting the 'elaboration' of particular languages and the 'standardization' of their content.

(2) Speech communities 'perceive' their 'own' and 'other' languages differently in terms of *identity*, i.e. belongingness to a group, literary heritage, and other cultural affinities.

(3) The demographic composition and various socio-economic pressures in a region lead to different patterns of language use

for intra-group and inter-group functions. These patterns provide us many insights concerning the issues of language maintenance versus assimilation, linguistic 'majority' versus 'minority' conflicts, and so on. A glimpse of the relative *strength* of different languages in the heterogeneous nation such as India is provided in the decadal censuses conducted since 1881 (Khubchandani 1997 : 86-98). *The People of India* project of the Anthropological Survey of India (Singh and Manoharan 1993) identifies 325 languages and their varieties based on the language profiles of 2198 communities, highlighting the multilingual nature of population.

The 1961 Census presents an account of 1652 mother tongues, classified into over two hundred and odd languages, spread all over the country (Mitra 1964, Khubchandani 1969). The Indian Constitution puts its seal on only 18 as "scheduled" languages (originally 14; Sindhi added in 1967; Nepali, Konkani, and Manipuri included in 1993) covering altogether nearly 96 precent of the entire population:

1. 13 of them are of Indo-Aryan origin (belonging to Indo-European family) representing 74 per cent of total population,

2. 4 languages are of the Dravidian stock, representing nearly 23 percent population,

3. one language of the Tibeto-Burman family (Manipuri) spoken by only 0.1 per cent of the country's population (i e by less than one million speakers).

Fifteen languages out of 18 are prominent in respective states of the federal India. Other three–Urdu, Sindhi, and Sanskrit–do not form majority in any state. In addition, there are 87 languages outside the 'Scheduled' languages whose claimants exceed ten thousand each covering about four per cent of the total population). All

14 languages of the Austro-Asiatic family; 52 languages of the Tibeto-Burman family; 9 languages of the Indo-Aryan stock, and 13 languages of the Dravidian stock, and one English, reported as "mother tongue" by only 233 thousand in the 1981 Census.

In political terms, the language accreditation in the Constitution was primarily guided by population size of "mother tongue" speakers, graphemic status and literary tradition. The Schedule was originally meant to serve as a direction to draw upon the resources of developing *one official language* Hindi in the next 15 years, i.e. by 1996.

The Sahitya Akademi, (a government-sponsored autonmous agency), was formed in the early fifties to coordinate the promotion of literature in fourteen 'scheduled' languages (later 15) and English. In the course of time a few more literary languages were added to the Akademi's purview, totalling to 22.

Decadal census accounts show there are more than forty languages dominant at the district level, Programmes on All India Radio are broadcast in over eighty "vernaculars"; many of them are without the writing system. More and more vernaculars are being utilized for literacy programmes in the rural hinterland. Nearly sixty languages are used as *preparatory* 'medium of instruction' at the primary stage.

Among the 'Scheduled' languages, Hindi is in the forefront, natively spoken by 39.9 per cent of India's total population. The next cluster of languages is: Telugu spoken by 8.2 per cent, Bengali by 7.8 per cent, Marathi by 7.5, Tamil by 6.8, Urdu by 5.3 and Gujarati by 5.0 per cent. The third cluster of languages, comprises of Kannada spoken by 4.1, Malayalam by 3.9, Oriya by 3.5 Panjabi by 2.6 and Assamese by 1.6 per cent. Finally, Kashmiri is spoken by 0.5 per cent (only 3.2 million in 1981 census), Sindhi by 0.3 per cent, and remaining Konkani and Nepali by 0.2 per cent each, Manipuri by 0.1 per cent, and classical Sanskrit claimed by nearly three thousand speakers as their "mother tongue".

The enumeration above vividly illustrates that India can be characterized as a land of 'minorities; Hindi being the largest minority. With the politicization of language pressure groups, attention has

increasingly focused on legislating the role of languages in public spheres of communication. In this regard, national leaders seem to have tackled the issues with great deftness, recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of diverse pressure groups in language politics.

Scores of small speech groups, consisting of a few thousand people each, continue to maintain their mother tongues in everyday life in various multilingual pockets. The case concerning the maintenance of Saurashtri in Madurai is discussed in detail by Emeneau (1962) and Pandit (1972).

The linguistic composition of the 330 districts, distributed in twenty-six states and union territories (at the time of the 1961 Census) clearly shows the prevalence of linguistically pluralistic communities in many parts of India. Nearly half the districts (152 out of 330, i.e. 46 per cent) were heterogeneous, with minority speech groups exceeding twenty per cent of the toal population (Khubchandani 1969). With the ongoing processes of reorganizing districts and reclassifying major languages under various political pressures, the 1981 Census reflects a reduced degree of heterogeneity to the extent that out of 412 districts, 152 districts, or 37 per cent, are still enumerated as heterogeneous. In the context of nation-building this phenomenon is referred to as 'contrived homogeneity' (Khubchandani 1991).

Dialectics of Identity and Communication

With a view to grasping the essence of Indian plurality, we list the issues which merit special attention: (a) fuzziness of language boundaries, (b) fluidity in language identity, (c) identity claims versus speech communication, and (d) complementarity of intra-group and inter-group communication.

Following Independence, language consciousness has grown, and loyalties, based on language identity have acquired political salience. In the new context, the language boundaries acquired a new order of fluidity. The Indian censuses bear witness to very large fluctuations concerning mother tongue claims, responding to overt identity pressures. For example:

– a phenominal increase between 1951 and 1961 of 14,611 per cent (!!) in the mother tongue claims for the Bihari group of languages, mainly Maithili, Bhojpuri and Magadhi.

– a move away from the *regional* towards the *religious* identity among bilingual Muslims throughout the country, revealed through the consolidation of Urdu mother tongue claims; a growth of 68.7 per cent during 1961 (against the country's total population growth of 24 per cent).

– excitement over language identity at the time of 1951 Census in the erstwhile Punjab (Khubchandani 1972).

– reclassification of major Indian languages (notably Hindi, Panjabi, Marathi) since 1971 to accommodate the political pressures of modern state-building and institutional pressures from the elites, discussed earlier.

The fluidity of language identity is revealed through the patterns of speech behaviour, operating across language boundaries. Such subjective divergences in language claims reveal the characteristics of malleability and plasticity in the communication patterns of the country. People belonging to oral cultures, by and large, are not very conscious of the speech characteristics which bind them in one language or place them across the neighbouring boundary, as is the case of Oriya and Telugu speakers, discussed earlier. People do not associate labels precisely with grammatical or pronounciation stereotypes, and the standardization and other propriety controls in verbal behaviour generally tend to be 'permissive'. Consequently, it is often difficult to determine whether a particular discourse belongs to language A or B. Such ambiguistics can arise with the Panjabi settlers in Delhi, urban Muslims in Gujarat and Maharashtra, and urbanized tribal communities. The fall-in-line processes of Western societies operated through various standardization machanisms, do not find easy acceptance in the speech behaviour of even literate groups in the South Asia region.

Multilingual societies are generally endowed with an access to a wider verbal repertoire for inter-group and inter-cultural communication. Members in these societies generally interact in everyday life situations without fully commiting themselves to learning the 'tradition-inspired' standardized nuances of another language or culture, such as the use of lingua franca Hindustani in South Asia and Swahili in East Africa. Hindustani, though linguistically not very different from pedantic 'high' Hindi and 'high' Urdu, is a diametrically distinct communication system. Hindustani cannot be regarded as a language in the narrow technical sense; it is a communication amalgam. Individuals in such societies acquire more *synergy* (i.e. putting forth one's own efforts) and *serendipity* (i.e. accepting the other on his/her own terms, being open to unexpectedness) and develop positive attitudes to variations in speech (to the extent of even appropriating deviations as the norm in the lingua franca), in the process of 'coming out' from their own language-codes to a neutral ground. A seemingly incoherent manifestation in these societies can make sense, coalescing into a persuasive whole, almost in spite of disparate elements. We get ample evidence of these processes on Doordarshan when conducting live programmes in diverse cross-cultural settings. The sophisticated elite in the developing world by and large, do not seem to have taken adequate cognizance of . . . these issues in framing language and communication policies for newly-emerging nations.

Billingual Identity

In a multilingual interaction no single language caters to all needs of the participant. Since language is a form of dyadic behaviour, the choice of using a particular language is determined by: (1) the pragmatic demands of the situation, depending on the listener's capacity and the speaker's ability as well as their cultivation of the language; and (2) the institutional factors of identification, language here serving as a label for status, prestige, and fashion. The second factor adds sentimental affiliations with one or the other language.

People have feelings about different languages varying in intensity from positive to neutral to negative – love, sympathy,

indifference, aversion, antipathy, or hate (Fodor 1966). People in general tend to have possessive feelings about their mother tongue and the languages (dialects, styles) of their region, partly owing to cultural inheritance and partly to which languages lead to various cultural and economic gains such as employment, political power, and cultural dominance.

A critical study of the 1961 Census returns on mother tongues and bilingualism brings into the limelight several convictions founded in tradition and other socio-psychological characteristics of different speech groups which have a great bearing on the individual's claims to one's "own" and one's "contact" languages. Patterns of intra-group and inter-group communication and the education system that encourages the "three language formula" show that many parts of the country find utilization of more than one contact language to be congenial.

The edifice of linguistic plurality in the Indian subcontinent is traditionally based upon the *complementary* use of more than one language and more than one writing system for the same language in one 'space'. Plural communities organize their multilingual repertoire through various processes of language contact. The use of the lingua franca Hindustani represents one such process, discussed above. Bilingualism is another such process, manifesting diverse patterns characterized by socio-economic strata and the density of population (in metropolitan cities, towns, and rural areas). In many regions one finds some rough correlation between the degree of heterogeneity in the native population and the intensity of bilingualism. A study based on the bilingualism returns in the 1961 Census reveals that certain regions claim predominance of state language and Hindi-Urdu, others of state language and English, and certain others of Hindi-Urdu and English. The study posits, the indices of communication pressures related to major contact languages, namely, pan-Indian Hindi-Urdu and English, and thirteen other Scheduled languages (Khubchandani 1972c, 1973).

The speech behaviour of heterogeneous communities is primarily guided by ecological multiplicity deeply entrenched in the nation's communication patterns. As a case in point, the inter-group

communication among tribals record a wide range of variation in the claims of bilingualism, mostly depending upon the degree of heterogeneity in their contact environments and their attitudes to languages surrounding them (Ghosh 1988; Khubchandani 1992).

Those belonging to the Scheduled tribes, nearing 54 millions as per the 1981 Census, are spread in over 200 districts. Tribal communities constitute majority in as many as forty-seven districts and form over 20 per cent of the total population in almost ninety districts out of the total 412 districts. There are many tribal groups which though living in one contiguous territory, come under the jurisdiction of more than one state: for example, Santalis live in Bihar (51 per cent), West Bengal (35 per cent) and Orissa (12 per cent); Kurukhs in Bihar (48 per cent), Madhya Pradesh (24 per cent) and W. Bengal (19 per cent). Bhils in Madhya Pradesh (36 per cent), Rajasthan (34 per cent), Maharashtra (18 per cent) and Gujarat (11 per cent).

Average bilingualism claims among tribals run much higher than those of the dominant groups. According to the 1961 returns, approximately 30 to 40 per cent tribals claim to be bilingual as per the orthodox claims, whereas the national average is only 9.7 per cent. (The census returns provide only a partial picture of the contact language patterns prevailing in the country, as no serious attention has been paid to the problem of eliciting or tabulating the data on bilingualism). Bilingualism patterns among tribal groups vary from one state to another. The subsidiary language returns of tribals highlight a three-language pattern in many states: (a) state language (or a locally dominant vernacular), (b) another tribal language of the region; and (c) language of the neighbouring state.

Some regions have developed local creolized languages like Sadri/Sadan, Kurmali (hybrid forms of Bihari and Mundari, in Bihar), Halabi (a hybrid of Chhatisgarhi, Marathi and Gondi, in Madhya Pradesh), and Nagamese (a hybrid of Assamese and Naga languages in Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh), as lingua franca for intra-group contact.

Bilingualism claims in India, by and large, reveal the extent of pressures developed among different speech groups for intra-group

and inter-group communication. In a situation of multiple choice, different factors – such as heterogeneity, demands made by the dominant speech group, contiguity of language borders, levels of education, occupational specialization, urbanity and prestige– contribute to the claims of regional languages, Hindi-Urdu and/or English as contact languages in a state. In many cases, the degree of proficiency or the intensity of use of the declared contact language does not correlate exactly with an individual, claims, which are made under social identification pressures on him to associate with a particualr group equivalent to his educational and economic standing, or made because of his affiliation in the language controversy in the transient post-colonial period of shift in language functions and privileges. In order to arrive at a rough correlation of the bilingual experience in the country, Khubchandani (1972b) has suggested the compilation of "pressure indices" of prominent languages in a region.

1) *State Language Pressure Index*: State-language claims depend largely on the demands made by the dominant speech group on the rest of the population in the state. A "State Language Pressure Index" is obtained on the basis of the proportion of minority speech groups claiming the dominant state language as their contact language.

$$\frac{\text{State contact-language claims}}{\text{linguistic minorities, population in the state}} \times 100$$

For example, in Tamil Nadu, 6 out of 10 non-Tamilians claim Tamil as their contact language, but in Rajasthan only 1 out of 100 non-Hindis claim Hindi as their contact language (cf. Table D, 1972 b).

2) *Hindi-Urdu Pressure Index*: The spread of Hindi-Urdu as a contact language throughout the country can be attributed to two major factors: (1) Speakers of Hindi-Urdu as mother tongue proliferate in almost all neighbouring and non-neighbouring states

outside six Hindi states. Six out of 10 non-Hindi states (at the time of the 1961 census) had contiguous borders with the Hindi region, and 9.5 million, Urdu natives (42 per cent) and 4.5 million Hindi natives (3 per cent) were reported from outside their home region. (2) The Hindi-Urdu amalgam, by virtue of being the dominant language of the largest region, exercise a good deal of influence in inter-group communication throughout the country (of course, with varying degree of intensity in different regions). It had virtually acquired the position of a lingua franca for trade, entertainment, and informal communication in heterogeneous situations (mainly in urban, industrial, and military settlements throughout the country, well before the hectic involvement of official and semi-official agencies in the promotion of Hindi.

The "Hindi-Urdu pressure Index" outside Hindi states is worked out on the basis of the first major feature, that is the proportion of speakers claiming Hindi or Urdu as a contact language to the number identifying Hindi-Urdu as mother tongue settled in these states

$$\frac{\text{claimants of Hindi-Urdu as contact language}}{\text{speakers of Hindi-Urdu as mother tongue}} \times 100$$

For example, in Gujarat we find 75 persons speaking Hindi-Urdu as a contact language per 100 speaking Hindi-Urdu as mother tongue, whereas in Tamil Nadu there are only 10 Hindi-Urdu contact speakers per 100 persons citing Hindi-Urdu as their mother tongue (cf. Table E).

3. *English Pressure Index*: Even after independence English has continued to be an important part of the communication matrix of urban India. Throughout the country, English contact speakers are approximately 50 times more numerous than those speaking English as their mother tongue. The spread of English in different states is due primarily to schooling opportunities and to the degree

of occupational specialization, which demands a certain minimum proficiency in English. In situations of multiple choice, the prestige attached to an international language also seems to be one of the vital factors in causing people to claim, English as their primary contact language. One finds a remarkable correlation between the ratio of the literate population and English claimants in different states, which is here taken as the basis for obtaining the "English Pressure Index".

$$\frac{\text{English claimants}}{\text{literate population}} \times 100$$

For example, in Punjab 16 persons of the 100 literates know English, whereas in Jammu and Kashmir only 4.5 per cent of the literates claim to know English (cf. Table E).

By and large, these pressure indices signify the degree of disposition of the bilingual population of a state toward a particular contact language.

Under these circumstances, claims of a subsidiary language depend very much on the psychological distinction one consciously makes between one's native speech and the formal "standard" speech. For many speakers in the North-central region Hindi-Urdu is like an "associate" native speech, and for them the switching of linguistic codes from native speech to Hindi or Urdu is similar to the switching of styles in a monolingual situation. As was pointed out earlier, most of the people in the region are quite unaware of their plurilingual behaviour and consider themselves "monolinguals" belonging to the Hindi or Urdu traditions. This phenomenon appears to be one of the primary reasons for the HUP region which, though relatively heterogeneous, shows very low claims in the 1961 census for all of India are 9.7 percent of the entire population.

Such widespread heterogeneity can be considered as a potentially significant factor in promoting bilingual interaction among different speech groups. But the low returns of bilingualism do not testify to the intensity of such interaction.

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A major factor contributing to the low claims to bilingualism in many linguistically pluralistic societies in India seems to be the conviction among many speech groups that knowledge of a contact language is associated with the ability to write that language in its prevalent script. Overlapping claims of Urdu (identified by Arabic script) and Hindi (identified by Devanagari script) made by nearly two million Hindi and Urdu natives is sound evidence in support of this tendency, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. *Claims of Hindu-Urdu in the 1961 Census*

		Contact Speakers			
State	Claimants of Hindi or Urdu as Mother Tongue (thousands)	Claimants (thousands)	Overlapping Claims* (thousands)	Net (thousands)	Native plus Contact Speakers† (thousands)
Andhra Pradesh	2693	634	39	595	3288
Tamil Nadu	656	66	1	65	721
Karnataka	2117	318	12	306	2423
Kerala	16	37	—	37	53
West Bengal	2731	511	118	393	3124
Orissa	433	139	7	132	565
Assam	535	275	3	272	807
Maharashtra	3956	2526	161	2365	6321
Gujarat	787	585	12	573	1360
Jammu and Kashmir	35	306	2	304	339
Hindi States					
Uttar Pradesh	70,867	1014	618	396	71,263
Bihar	24,730	1784	300	1484	26,214
Madhya Pradesh	26,012	1658	187	1471	27,483
Punjab	11,557	916	269	647	12,204
Rajasthan	7225	215	64	151	7376
Delhi (Union territory)	2210	183	52	131	2341

* Speakers of Hindi as a mother tongue claiming, Urdu, and speakers of Urdu as a mother tongue claiming Hindi.

† The sum of speakers of mother tongue plus net contact speakers.

To what extent this conviction can blur the bilingualism picture is evident from the claims of Sindhi immigrants as reported in the 1951 Census' "Gurumukhi" is reported as a subsidiary 'language' by Sindhi immigrants from Bombay Province in this census, Sindhi is primarily written in Arabic script. But some Sindhi Hindus, especially women, read and write Sindhi in Gurumukhi script. Some people equate having this knowledge of Gurumukhi script with acquiring another language. There is a widespread traditional conviction among many speech comunities in India that associate the mastery of any additional script with the knowledge of another language. The Panjabi language is predominantly written in Gurumukhi script. Hence, Sindhi speakers, claims to know "Gurumukhi" script were interpreted in the census as knowing the "Panjabi" language, and over two thousand Sindhi native speakers (mostly women) were shown claiming Panjabi as their primary contact language in the 1951 census, which is far from true (Khubchandani 1963).

Many such traditional convictions distort the objective account of bilingualism among the Indian population. The extent to which many contact languages are spoken or merely understood cannot be fully discerned through census returns. Hence, one has to accept these returns as presenting a rather conservative account of bilingualism. At the same time, these returns present a valuable picture of the attitudes of speakers and trends of social identification at a particular moment in time. In spite of their limitations, one cannot underestimate the importance of the data made available through these returns. Bilingualism data in subsequent censuses has been further distorted by varying definition of bilingualism; these changes make decadel comparisons virtually impossible.

Organic Pluralism

As discussed earlier, pluralism in the Indian subcontinent is characterized by a stratificational network of primary groups governed by a varying degree of boundedness signifying lineage, language, occupation, and religion. Different identity groups are involved in a complex web of relationships with one another, presenting a kind of mosaic, and are averse to their being rigidly

identified with a particular 'insulated' group. Diverse groups thus related to as an integral part of the whole under the label "we" can be characterized as:

(1x1x1=3): Multiplication (x) signifying an *integral* relation.

This phenomenon is identified as a case of *organic* pluralism, where multiple identities are strengthened by a measure of fluidity in their manifestation. Indian heterogeneity in speech, marked by implicit 'etiquette' and flexibility, can best be viewed within an overall 'organic unity' of communications (Chatterji 1943). This proposition leads us to consider that *variation* in speech could be a significant contributing factor to the richness in verbal and non-verbal skills.

In contrast, different identity groups, when combined under the umbrella of a common structure sharing the same space and/or same interests and are proportionately balanced in a structural whole, characterize the label 'we' as:

(1+1+1=3): Addition (+) signifying a *combined* relation.

This phenomenon has been refered as *structural* pluralism. In such a society harmony among diverse primary groups is sought by containing their rival aspirations through safeguards provided within the parameters of equality and social justice (Gordon 1981). Pluralism in many contemporary societies is generally based on the co-existence of different primary groups structurally separated by ethnic/nationality boundaries insulated through traits such as colour, religion, and language territory (in the case of migrants, their ancestral languages).

The two models of pluralism – organic and structural – are sharply distinguished by their relation to the whole:

a) *integral* relation, where diverse primary groups form an integral part of the organic whole.

b) *combined* relation, where diverse primary groups are propoprtionately balanced in a structural whole.

One further notices two major corss-currents characterize both models of pluralism, one favouring conditions for *homogenization* and the other promoting the processes of *differentiation*. These cross-currents affect, in a significant manner, directions in the maintenance or shift of socio-cultural diversity.

Organic pluralism in South Asia is, by and large, supported by differentiating characteristics of heterogenity, federality, and so on. This phenomenon is unlike the homogenizing traits as found in the melting pot pluralism (such as in the United States during the pre-World War time); it accepts variations within undiversal ideals. Under structural pluralism, the liberal pluralism (as in the Scandinavian countries) favours conditions for *voluntary* homogenization where diversity is subtly tempered with individual preferences and individual rights. Corporate pluralism, on the other hand, contributes to the accentuation of socio-cultural identities through mandatory safeguards for 'group' rights, as typified by the erstwhile Soviet Union, Switzerland, Belgium, and Canada, Recent trends in India, and the United States point to the processes favouring corporate pluralism.

This schema gives us a *Plurality Square* where the distinction between organic and structural is regarded as of primary order, and the distinction favouring homogenization versus differentiation is treated as of secondary order.

	Homogenizing	Differentiating
Organic	'melting pot'	stratificational
structural	liberal	corporate

Plurality Square

Diverse profiles of speech communication in different countries and at different times make us realize the futility of pursuing illusionary goals of universal order in the name of 'efficient' communication. In this framework, India, as a sociolinguistic area, is not a collection of fragments which the State holds together, but it presents a series of mosaics – religious, linguistic, regional and

covering other socio-cultural dimensions – which fit together in a whole as in a jigsaw puzzle, and no single constituent however, small numerically, is marginalized. Identities of Panjabi, Hindi, Urdu, and Sindhi speakers in both India and Pakistan regions provide a vivid example of the phenomenon. Inter-language boundaries in many of these regions have remained fuzzy and fluid. Plural speech communities tend to organize their repertoires through diglossic patterning, grassroots 'folk' multilingualism (distinct from 'elegant' bilingualism or trilingualism learned through conscious efforts), code-switching, pidginization, and other such processes of language contact.

Indian pluralism is being viewed as a 'centrifugal' device by which different groups attempt to retain and preserve their unique cultural attributes while developing common institutional participation at the national level (Schermerhorn 1970). This trait can also be regarded as a good example of 'ethnic arithmetic' where particularist loyalties are allowed to be nourished without eliminating the subordinate cultures (Weiner 1972).

Role of State

The role of State and of language-elite tends to make language identity, hitherto a cultural trait, more political. This has led to a shift in language identity, an upsurge away from a low-key *instrumental* role in a framework of stratificational pluralism, to a top-gear *defining* characteristic in the new emerging order of pluralism. We see the signs of India turning away from an organically 'accommodating' *plurilingual* nation into an institutionally 'assertive' *multilingual* nation.

Many unending debates over nation's language policy assume that each language is a monolithic crystallized whole, claiming equal privileges for different languages in education, administration etc. various pressure groups aspire for parallel development of their 'pet' languages – be it mother tongue, national language, or international language – as a vehicle of creativity and thinking, or for their use in technology and other needs of the contemporary society. These

claims have resulted in dichotomies such as developed 'rich' languages versus undeveloped 'poor' languages, or majority/minority languages.

It is necessary to break the *monolith* of promoting and developing language X or Y in its entirety when determining its functions in interpersonal, societal, aesthetic and political domains. As an illustration, the language needs for literacy, for general education, and for occupational skills and for specialization (such as in scientific enquiry) may be at variance in a plurilingual society, and many require different strategies to cope with the challenge. In plural societies different dimensions inter-flow simultaneously into one another, as in an osmosis.

Given the mosaic of conflicting elites in the country, there is no dearth of language solutions. Instead of discarding or inducting different languages for specific domains (in education, administration, judiciary, etc.), a system of proper checks and balances need to be worked out by which *malignant* functions associated with certain languages are curbed (such as the imperial domination of English, trans-created *here* but 'evaluated' *there* !!) and the *constructive* role of others get proper incentives (such as, the communicative assets of lingua franca Hindustani, spread in the entire South Asian region and beyond in the Gulf, Afghanistan, Mauritius, and in the countries touching the rim of Indian ocean.

Language plays a crucial role in the reorganization of institutions and it is inseparable from such activities as planning, propoganda, and evaluation. Every culture/language, irrespective of being 'big' or 'small'; or being treated as 'strong' or 'weak' serves as a *bridge* between others and as an instrument of interaction which is humanly universal. The overall guiding spirit should be to serve language environment which makes sense and meets with the demands of social justice (Khubchandani 1995).

Inter-cultural and inter-lingual communications, as a means of harmonizing primordial identities are indeed of great significance in promoting respect for cultural and linguistic diversity and injecting vitality into the great nation. One usually finds that in a heterogenous situation, the relationship between small and big cultural entities are

not organized on *reciprocity*. We have yet to come to grips in formulating a coherent policy for knitting complex pluralities and making available equal opportunities to different sections of societies which can lead to an intergral cultural development. The litmus test of national integration in the Indian context will be creating the climate to the *sublimation* of cultural identities, rather than submitting to the aggressive assertion of narrow identities.

If we want to guard against the sweeping currents of fundamentalist ideologies, the State has to exercise utmost care when it comes to *defining and regulating* primordial identities in the name of socio-cultural development. State's attempts to resolving primordial issues in an ad hoc and arbitrary manner often lead to aggrevating the sense of deprivation and to the growth of insular tendencies among different cultural groups. Setting up of a permanent autonomous commission on language and communication, on the lines similar to the French and Scandinavian language academies, can provide a useful forum for the intellectual articulation of the issues, and guide the executive and the Parliament in framing the policies with a long term perspective. This can have a significant bearing on the issues concerning the *quality* of human communication in a changing society.

Conclusion

It is necessary to bring a pluralist vigour in making policies for fair play in communications though the flowering of cultural diversity (as environmentalists, respect for bio-diversity). It will require a substantive shift in the concerns of social scientists to take seriously the fuzzy reality and transactive domains of language (s) as a 'live force' in the contemporary milieu, recognizing the fact that language remains in perpetual flux along with the usage just as the reality keeps changing.

Such a breakthrough is possible by stretching autonomy in defining time-and-space bound reality as a manner of conviviality so that Oriental societies are not reduced to mere objects to be studied in terms of Western concepts and categories (which are treated not as culture-bound but universals).

Recent debates over human rights in international forums poignantly reflect an awareness of this malady. There is a pervading tendency in the third world to apply externally induced universal models to explain contempory Indian phenomena to the west in its own idiom. In this process pertinent enquiries about plurilingual societies (such as the fuzzy demarcation of language boundaries in the case of Marathi and Konkani, of Panjabi and Dogri; issues of identity versus communication in defining languages as in Hindi, Urdu and Panjabi; grassroots and elitist tensions in prescribing a representative standard as in Indian Angrezi) do not merit serious attention.

~~Out~~ conceptualization of the prevailing diversity in communication in everyday life needs to be treated as a humane enterprise with somewhat lighter overtones. Among the tribals in India, a plurilingual repertoire rests rather lightly on their shoulders (Khubchandani 1992). They do not get distracted by grave intellectual stands, often rigid, taken by the academia regarding the psychological and sociological theories of language acquisition and language contact.

In the realm of social planning, intellectuals very often lose track by weighing grains (such as speech in everyday life transactions) on the precision scale used for weighing gold (such as language in a sophistic discourse).

The Indian experience tells us that a genuine understanding of plural societies will largely be guided by viewing language as a synergic network inspiring *trust* in cross-culture settings, along with the complementarity of empowering the particular.

The multiplicity of languages in a plural society, if handled with proper sensitivity, can lead to cohesion, instead of generating friction as has been the bane of language politics in the country during the post-Independence period.

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